

FacultyLine

Office of the University Faculty, 138 Fawcett Hall (775-3560)
FacultyLine #226, December 04, 2018

Colleagues,

In last month's Faculty Line¹, University Faculty were asked to contact their Senators to discuss their positions on whether the Senate should or should not call a Special meeting of the University Faculty to discuss confidence in the University President and/or the Board of Trustees. Yesterday, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee met to discuss views of the Faculty on this matter.

Faculty communicated to their Senators a wide range of concerns regarding the current state of the University and its administrative leadership. The Executive Committee has heard from many Faculty that have concerns which they wish to publicly express, particularly regarding actions and statements of the University's Board of Trustees both in the past and at the present time. Conversely, the Executive Committee has also heard from many Faculty who do not believe that this is the appropriate time to consider a No Confidence action. These sentiments are not evenly divided throughout the colleges. In issues where there is not uniformity of opinion, the Faculty Senate must be particularly careful to allow the Faculty Constitution and Robert's Rules of Order to provide guidance regarding its procedures.

Executive committee action

A motion to call a Special Meeting of the Faculty to discuss confidence in the University's Board of Trustees was placed before the Faculty Senate Executive Committee yesterday for consideration as an item of normal business for the December meeting of the Faculty Senate. The Executive Committee was divided on this issue. Therefore, a vote of the Executive Committee was held. By majority vote, the proposed business will not be placed on the Faculty Senate agenda as an item of normal business. A majority of the constituent units, as represented by EC membership, do not currently support this motion as a normal item of business for the Faculty Senate.

Procedure for advancing business

There are three different types of votes commonly implemented to conduct the business of the University Faculty. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee allocates one equal vote for each constituency², regardless of size. The Faculty Senate itself uses a representative proportional vote, where the voting power of each constituency is determined by the number of fully-affiliated faculty in the unit³. Special meetings of the Faculty (or amendments to the constitution) provide each member of the University Faculty with direct vote independent of constituency.

For a Special Meeting of the University Faculty to be initiated as normal business through the Faculty Senate, the motion must successfully pass each of the first two types of vote. First, a majority of

¹ Faculty Line #225, <https://www.wright.edu/sites/www.wright.edu/files/uploads/2018/Nov/article/225-2018-11-FacLine-v1.0-final.pdf>

² RSCoB, CEHS, CECS, CoLA, CoNH, CoSM, Lake, BSoM, and SoPP; as defined in Article III, Section 4 of the Faculty Constitution, <https://policy.wright.edu/policy/2010-faculty-constitution>

³ Each constituency having one voting senator per 30 fully-affiliated faculty (or fraction thereof); as defined in Article III, Section 4 of the Faculty Constitution, <https://policy.wright.edu/policy/2010-faculty-constitution>

constituent units must support the item of business through action in the Executive Committee to place the item on the Senate's agenda (this vote failed to pass yesterday). Second, a majority of the Faculty's proportional representatives must twice support the item of normal business in the Faculty Senate. The third type of vote then takes place at the Special Meeting where the University Faculty vote, in person.

Follow-up

Your Executive Committee representatives have acted diligently to represent the entire Faculty through due process. For those disappointed in the majority opinion of your Faculty Leadership, please know that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee has discussed this matter extensively and that it is very likely that at least a roughly equal number of Faculty prefer this decision. The Faculty are far from one mind on this issue. Given the sizable divide among viewpoints, as well as the importance of the matters at hand, it seems unlikely that this issue will be fully resolved in the near future. It is likely that this matter will be discussed again. Such long-term uncertainty is not without cost.

The Executive Committee neither encourages nor discourages specific follow-up on this issue. However, previous Senates have noted room for improvement in our default process for Confidence/No Confidence actions. In 2017, the Faculty Senate approved the "Procedure Two" process⁴ to address these perceived process deficiencies. This Senate-approved procedure can, in part, avoid prolonged uncertainty. This alternate process empowers a sizable minority of the University Faculty (50+) to craft a written argument/petition, allows for a written rebuttal from the subject of the petition, and gives opportunity for all University Faculty to voice opinion directly on the arguments via anonymous electronic vote. To prevent abuse of this process, it can be undertaken no more than once every thirteen (13) months. This procedure was deemed to be a reasonable balance between the dangers of potentially silencing a minority opinion and the dangers of potentially allowing a minority opinion to dominate the work of the Faculty. There can be no question that this process allows petitioners to clearly communicate specific concerns, provides reasonable opportunity for rebuttal, and provides the opportunity for most widespread participation in the process through direct electronic vote.

Final thoughts

I would, again, like to thank all of you for taking the time to discuss these issues with your Senate representatives. Your Senate takes all of the work before it, including the initiation of Votes of Confidence or No Confidence very seriously. We have heard wide-spread concerns. Even though these concerns fall short of convincing a majority of constituencies represented by the Faculty Senate EC to move forward with a Vote of Confidence/No Confidence at this time, these concerns have been heard. We will continue to assess how best to directly address these concerns.

Please remember that the Faculty Senate is a representative body. Let your Faculty Senators know where you stand on the issues so that we can fairly and accurately represent the Faculty in our recommendations and official opinions. Tentative agendas, final agendas, and approved minutes of all Faculty Senate business are available online for your consideration.⁵ Please contact your Faculty

⁴ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate/about/faculty-senate-procedures>

⁵ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate>

Senators⁶ with your thoughts, concerns, and positions on these (and future) issues so that they can fairly and accurately represent you in Senate deliberations and business.

Faculty Senate meetings are open to all. The last Senate meeting of this academic term is Monday, Dec 10, at 2:30 pm, in the Student Union Endeavor Room (E156 SU). The Faculty Senate looks forward to hearing from and questioning President Schrader and Provost Edwards on the state of the University. As always, we invite you to join us.

Travis Doom, Professor
Faculty President

⁶ <https://www.wright.edu/faculty-senate/about/2018-19-officers-and-members>